Travails of Hindu Afghan Refugees in Germany

2367. SHRI V.N. GADGIL: Will the Minister EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to State:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news item which appeared in Hindustan Times dated December 3, 1999 about the Travails of Hindu Afghan refugees in Germany;

(b) whether they are prevented from coming to India because they are not given visas;

(c) if so, why visas are being denied to them?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) Government is aware of the news item which appeared in Hindustan Times on December 3, 1999 about Hindu Afghan refugees in Germany.

(b) and (c) There is no discrimination in Government policy towards Afghan refugees in third countries wishing to visit India. In accordance with the appropriate regulations of the Govenrment of India, foreigners wishing to visit India can normally obtain visas from the Indian Mission/Post in the area where they reside.

Passport Offices in the country

2368. DR. MOHAN BABU: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to State:

(a) total number of Passport Ofices opened in the country during the last three years with specific reference to Andhra Pradesh; and

(b) total number of Passport Offices proposed to be opened in the country during the Ninth Plan Period, State-wise, separately, togetherwith the financial allocation made therefore?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) The number of Passport Offices opened in the country during the last three years, State-wise are as folows:—

Passport Office	State	Year of opening
Ghaziabad	Uttar Pradesh	1997
Visakhapatnam	Andhra Pradesh	1997
Thane	Maharashtra	1997
Pune	Maharashtra	1998
Srinagar (re-opened)	Jammu & Kashmir	1997

(b) The opening of new passport offices is governed by certain criteria such as the location of existing offices, volume of applications from a particular region and regard to the recommendations of the Standing Committee of Parliament of External Affairs that there should be atleast 50,000 applications per annum from an area for a new passport office to be opened. While considering such proposals the availability of staff in the Central Passport Organisation is also taken into account. At present there is no proposal to open any new Passport Office in the near future.

Inhuman behaviour to Indian soldiers during Kargil war

†2369. SHRI SATISH CHANDRA SITARAM PRADHAN: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to State:

(a) whether Government have raised the issue of tortuous and inhuman behaviour meted to our soldiers by the Pakistan during Kargil was, before the International Human Rights Commission;

(b) if so, the results thereof; and

(c) whether this issue has been raised by anyone other than Government?

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.